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The Unity of Christendom

DURING the week in which this appears Christians all over the world will be praying for the unity of Christ's Church. That is true; but unfortunately it is not true that *all Christians* over the world will be offering such prayers. The unity movement is as yet largely the concern of the leaders of the churches. It has not as yet reached the rank and file of Christian people with any compelling power. In many places in America it is true that people see obvious reasons against the multiplication of churches. Many, although relatively few, likewise are impatient of the slow processes of conference and share the attitude of those who with cheerful optimism think that a world government has only to be established to do away with war.

Indeed the parallel between the situation in the churches and in the political world is very clear. In the latter we have had enough sense to see that we live in one world, that the interests of one nation affect every other, and that interdependence rather than independence must be our goal. The recognition of this obvious fact has been strong enough to create the United Nations, and that body in spite of its many divergent interests and especially of the consistent blocking of common action by one group, has successfully carried out many common projects. In America a few cave-dwellers still question it and now and again a group gets thoroughly "het up" and demands that we repudiate the whole thing and drive the United Nations and all its works from our shores.

In other words, as the forces of internationalism increase in strength, nationalism seems to keep pace with it. India, the Moslem world, Indonesia, Israel, almost anywhere one looks, the desire for independence meets one. Whatever else helped to lead the Chinese people to accept the victory of the Communists one factor was certainly nationalism. There is plenty of it in America but here we call it patriotism!

We turn to the ecumenical movement and precisely the same fact meets us everywhere. The church groups are seeking greater cohesion, a clearer sense of their own mission within total Christianity, and a more effective presentation of their own claims.* It is very obvious. Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Disciples, indeed every major group has been tightening up its organization to make it more effective while at the same moment here in America most of these major groups have gladly united in The National Council and are members of The World Council of Churches. The Orthodox Churches (except those in Communist lands) readily join with other Christians in these conciliar efforts, at the same time emphasizing with increasing definiteness that they believe themselves to represent the only really valid development of the Christian faith. Rome feels the pressure and the Pope gives a guarded permission for conference. At the same time the rigidity of the Roman Catholic position increases and the promulgation of the doctrine of the Assumption deepens the gulf which separates that church from the rest of the Christian world.

As one faces this situation two rather obvious comments present themselves—both of which *mutatis mutandis,* apply equally to the international situation. The first is that this new or renewed emphasis on denominational development is a most important factor in the whole movement towards unity. The impatience which some journals and many individuals display, to which we have referred, is quite misplaced. If in a burst of enthusiasm we get together by ignoring matters which have really seemed very precious to many of our people we are simply inviting future schisms. It is of the highest importance that the *total* contribution of any one communion to *total* Christianity be made clear. There must be a

* It will be remembered that Professor Mehl in a recent number of this journal discussed the dangers of the increasing confessionalism especially in connection with the Lutheran and Reformed communions.

place for it if it is a genuine contribution. The "Coming Great Church" must be as rich as the whole vast body of Christian people can make it; something of that kind Dr. Craig has said in his recent book on unity.

And the other comment, for the moment most important, is the realization that whatever their differences all Christian people can unite in prayer for the unity of Christendom. All Christian people are nurtured in prayer. All believe that the one heavenly Father hears their prayers. All believe that Christ's Church should be one. They may envisage that unity in many diverse fashions. It is a long, long way from the compactness of an authoritarian church with an infallible head, to the looseness of independency, each congregation setting its own standards and yet all recognizing and sharing each other's ministry and sacraments and uniting for missionary and other activities. But each and every group has the same deep sense of the meaning of unity; each when at its best, longs to share what it has found in Christ with all others who call upon his name.

Prayer unites. It carries us to China and those Christian brethren whose plight was so vividly described in a recent number of this journal; to Russia, for the Iron Curtain is no barrier to the Spirit; to Rome, where infallible authority pleads before God. It carries us to our brothers around the corner. It unites us with men and women whose politics we may hate. It promises more than the unity of the church for in that unity is foreshadowed the unity of all God's children.—E. L. P.

Editorial Notes

The prospects for continued peace, declares Mr. Churchill, are better for 1952 than they were two years ago. It may be so. There is in fact no reason to expect the outbreak of hostilities in this new year: but there are, on the other hand, no really hopeful omens for a relaxation of international tension.

The war in Korea may end in an uneasy armistice, though this is not certain. It will be an uneasy one, which will not allow for much relaxation of tension. The stubbornness with which the Chinese and Koreans insist on the right to build air-strips in Korea and the evidence of a build-up of great air forces in Manchuria, prove that they do not intend to achieve an armistice which will end in a real peace. There is furthermore nothing to bargain about to achieve a real peace. For good or ill, we have ruled out the possibility of the admission of China into the United Nations as a part of an over-all settlement; and there is nothing else on which we could now bargain.

Though Secretary Acheson has rightly insisted that if we are to negotiate we must do so from a "position of strength," it is now apparent that even our new military strength does not put us within reach of new possibilities of negotiation. The Russians would undoubtedly like to negotiate some plan of the neutralization of Germany. But it is also apparent that they would accept no plan of neutralization which would not permit them to penetrate a defenseless Germany by political chicane. If the plan did not offer such an opportunity they would not yield the loss of Eastern Germany as the price of its adoption. That is why the hopes and plans of Christian leaders, like Pastor Niemoeller, for the establishment of a united Germany, are futile.

Barring such a "deal," we will continue to support Europe in building its defenses, even though the hazards of this program are very great. It is now apparent that the rearmament of Western Europe has snuffed out many of the economic gains which were achieved through the Marshall Plan. Our own and European inflation has again widened the "dollar gap." It has also left the workers of the continent in a sullen mood. For the workers of Europe do not, as American workers, have the possibility of riding the inflationary spiral.

The consequence of this deterioration in the economy of Europe has made us very unpopular on the continent, particularly on the political left but also on the right. Some of our unpopularity is undoubtedly due to real mistakes in our policy. But we are now in the position of "being damned if we do and damned if we don't." The only alternative to the policy of rearmament to which Europe objects would be to keep our own defenses strong without pushing Europe into a common defense. But such a policy would be subject to the indictment that we intend to abandon Europe and to "liberate" her only after she is overrun.

There is, in short, no simple road to either security or peace. One of the most difficult problems which this nation, and indeed our whole generation faces, is the necessity of bearing great burdens without being able to see the end of the road where the burden might be lifted.—R. N.

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An American Embassy at the Vatican—What Is at Stake?

HENRY P. VAN DUSEN

MANY Americans are baffled by the present controversy over the proposed American Embassy at the Vatican.

On the one hand, they know that a Vatican Embassy is opposed by the Protestant clergy of the country virtually to a man, by a large proportion of Protestant laity, by leaders of the Jewish community speaking through the American Jewish Congress, by not a few Catholic laymen, and by numbers of citizens of no religious affiliation.

On the other hand, the arguments favoring the Embassy are persuasive: "The Vatican is 'the best-informed listening-post in Europe.' The Roman Catholic Church would prove an invaluable ally in the struggle with Russia. Nearly forty other nations have some sort of diplomatic representation at the Vatican; why shouldn't the United States?" Some are inclined to dismiss the matter with a shrug: "Isn't this hubbub a tempest in a teapot?"

There are two major questions to which troubled citizens desire and deserve clear and convincing answers: 1) Would a Vatican Embassy strengthen the fight against Communism? 2) Would a Vatican Embassy really constitute a departure from basic American principles; and if so, how serious would such departure be? The first is a question of expediency, the second of principle; the one, of immediate tactics, the other, of the most fundamental policy.

I

It is generally assumed that the Vatican is "the best-informed 'listening-post' in Europe" and that "the Church of Rome is a potential ally of great value in our struggle with Russia and her satellites." This is the point which weighs most heavily with many laymen. Defense against the advance of Communism has been accepted as the overarching determinant of national policy. In its service, not a few expedients repellant to conscience have already been countenanced. "What if diplomatic recognition of the Vatican is contrary to an ancient American tradition? Isn't it worth it?"

What are the facts? There is no point on which the general public is more generally misinformed.

Time, surely an unbiased reporter, records that "the efficiency of the Vatican's 'world-wide information service' has probably been exaggerated for many years." On at least three recent occasions, information of the highest consequence to the Vatican itself —the agreement between the Polish Government and the Roman Catholic bishops, the banishment of Archbishop Beran from Prague, the trial and sentence of Archbishop Grosz in Hungary—reached the Vatican first from secular sources.

Moreover, this is a point on which it is not necessary to speculate. For ten years, from 1940 to 1950, the American President maintained a "personal representative" at the Vatican in the person of Mr. Myron C. Taylor. It is widely supposed that much valuable information was secured. But officers of the State Department with access to all the reports of the Taylor Mission have stated "No information of substantial value was derived which could not have been obtained in other ways." It should be more widely known that highest officials of the State Department are indifferent to, when not opposed to, the Vatican Embassy, though they are not at liberty to declare publicly their dissent from the President. These are among the facts which support the charge that the reasons for the proposal, whatever they may be, are certainly not those of urgent national interest.

Again, the Vatican's opposition to Communism is supposed to guarantee that the Catholic Church will prove a ready and useful ally in the East-West conflict. Actually, the Vatican has studiously declined to take any position with respect to this "conflict." The deliberate and unqualified "neutrality" of the Roman Church with respect to the struggle between Russia and the West has never been more categorically and emphatically affirmed than in the Pope's Christmas Address of 1951. After rebuking any who seek to influence the Catholic Church toward a "renunciation of her neutrality and a definite election in favor of one or the other side," the Address flays with almost equal vehemence "a world which loves emphatically to call itself 'the free world' " and "the opposite camp." This declaration should silence once and for all those who cling to the illusion that the Vatican might lend support to the democratic Powers in their struggle.

Rome's pronouncements and actions have been directed against Communism as an atheistic philosophy. It should always be borne in mind that the Roman Church is engaged in a ceaseless struggle against *every* form of non-Christian ideology—naturalism, modernism, non-theistic humanism, secularism, Islam as well as Communism. But that Church

has succeeded in coming to terms and effecting *rapprochements* with governments in countries where each of these alternative "enemies of Christian faith" is dominant.

Moreover, it is well to recall that it was the present Pope, when Cardinal Secretary of State, who actually worked out the agreement with Hitler before he came to power. Dr. Herman Bruening, then Chancellor of Germany and himself a leading Roman Catholic layman, has more than once given his considered judgment that it was Cardinal Pacelli's deal with Hitler, more than any other single factor, which paved the way for his seizure of power. The Vatican accord with Mussolini is a similar case in point.

This is not to prophesy that the Vatican is about to enter into a deal with Russia, in the immediate or foreseeable future. It is to register the indisputable fact of history that the Roman Catholic Church has never hesitated to work out an accommodation on the most favorable obtainable terms with *any* government which will permit minimum freedoms for its worship, however unwelcome its ruling philosophy. More important, it is to raise serious doubts as to the trustworthiness of the Vatican as an ally of democracy.

In any event, it is obvious that if the Pope really desires collaboration with the United States Government in a common struggle against Communism, an Embassy at the Vatican is not necessary. The American Embassy in Rome is less than five minutes from Vatican City. There is no information which could properly be shared between the Roman Church and the American Government which could not readily be transmitted through that channel, and there are many other available avenues of communication.

The Executive Committee of the National Council of Churches has given this definitive comment:

> Formal diplomatic relations constitute no binding agreement for either party to reveal any information except what it chooses to reveal. On the other hand, if both parties desire that all sources of information be utilized and coordinated against communism, this can be achieved through our ambassador to the Government of Italy, who is resident in Rome and readily accessible to the Vatican. Eager allies in a common cause are not frustrated in their common efforts by considerations of protocol or prestige.

The conclusion is inescapable: *Either the Vatican has no collaboration of value to offer, OR its professed desire for allies in its crusade against Communism is subordinate to its determination to obtain diplomatic recognition by the United States.* This leads to the second question.

II

Would the creation of an American Embassy at the Vatican involve a departure from a basic principle of our American form of Government; and, if so, how important would such departure be? Would it constitute a threat, not only to present national unity, but to future national well-being; and, if so, how grave would such threat be?

It is important to get the constitutional issue into clear focus. Professor Edward S. Corwin of Princeton has been at pains to establish that the President, charged with the conduct of the nation's foreign affairs, is within his constitutional rights in recognizing any foreign government and nominating a diplomatic representative to it, and that the Supreme Court is not likely to review charges that the President has moved beyond his authority under the Constitution. (Letter to the *New York Times,* Nov. 12, 1951.)

But the crucial issue is both more general and far more fundamental—not whether the appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican is outside a strict construction of Presidential prerogative, but whether the recognition of a particular Church as a political power and the granting of special privilege to that Church is contrary to a conviction which lies at the very basis of the American system of government.

Most Americans are vaguely aware of the so-called "doctrine of the separation of Church and State." They may know that it appears in the Federal Constitution in the First Amendment. But it sounds in their ears more like a shibboleth inherited from a by-gone era than a significant guide-post for current policy. They suppose that this principle may have been framed to meet the special circumstances of the nation's early years with limited application. They do not recognize it as a structural foundation of American Government which has not simply been maintained throughout the nation's history out of deference to a hoary tradition but has actually become progressively more relevant and more determinative in the developing life of the country until it wields a larger influence today than at any earlier time.

On the original meaning of the principle, Professor Corwin himself may be cited as authority. Discussing the intent of the First Amendment to the Constitution, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion," and recent interpretations of the Amendment by the Supreme Court, Dr. Corwin writes: "The historical record shows beyond peradventure that the core idea of 'an establishment of religion' comprises the idea of *preference*, i.e., *that no public authority should give preference to any religion or any denomination.*" (*Thought,* Dec. 1948, pp. 669-681. Italics his.)

It should be added that, in this matter, the Supreme Court has repeatedly, and especially recently,

gone far beyond what Professor Corwin thinks to have been the intention of the Founding Fathers. The Court has ruled that the Constitution enjoins both National and State Governments from "aiding all religions" as well as "aiding one religion" or "preferring one religion over another." In other words, the highest courts of the land have interpreted the prohibition against special recognition of *any* religion in increasingly rigorous terms.

The specific evil which the Founders of this country sought to exclude in the most categorical and inviolable terms was *the interlocking of Church and Government.* They decreed unfettered freedom and protection for every Church, special privilege for no Church, and, above all, no official recognition of any particular Church. The policy of the Founders which has guided the nation throughout its history might be defined as: sympathetic interest in every religious group, special favor for none; i.e., complete though benevolent impartiality toward all religious bodies.

They were especially opposed to any Church which should take to itself the status and prerogatives of a State, and to any State which should take to itself the prerogatives of a Church. And their opposition was buttressed by their knowledge of the tragic mischief which dogged Europe for centuries through the efforts of the Church of Rome to direct and dominate Governments. This was a principal cause of the Protestant Reformation. While the Reformation originated in spiritual revulsion against corrupt practices, it was implemented in large measure by political revolt against the usurpation of power and financial exactions by the Pope and his representatives. What was at stake at the Reformation was, in no small measure, the right relation between Church and State, and specifically a struggle for emancipation from the strangling grip of the Roman hierarchy over governments.

In this matter, the Roman Catholic Church has not altered its position in any important particular in the centuries since the Reformation. It has never for one moment accepted the validity of the American view of right relations between Church and Government. On the contrary, it holds, and has always held, to a directly contrary view. Its stand was set forth by Pope Leo XIII, whom the present Pope has recently quoted as his "great predecessor": "It is not lawful for the State to hold in equal favor different kinds of religion," interpreted in the authoritative work on *Catholic Principles of Politics* by Ryan and Boland to mean, "since the profession of one religion is necessary in the state, that religion must be professed which alone is true" (i.e., Roman Catholicism). Nor is this a matter of theory only. It is actual practice in countries such as Spain where the Catholic Church is able to secure the enactment of its will through political rulers. The Catholic Church looks forward to, and works assiduously toward, a condition in every nation where, Catholics being a dominant majority, the Church can insist upon the recognition of the Roman Catholic Church as the official religion of the nation, the proscription of all other forms of religious faith with severe disabilities, and the subservience of Catholic political rulers to the advice and direction of the Roman hierarchy.

Many non-Catholics do not know that this is official Roman Catholic policy. Many more simply cannot bring themselves to believe that the Roman Church means what it says. In this regard, the reluctance of millions to take at their face value the reiterated declarations of purpose of Adolf Hitler and the Communist leaders offer a sobering analogy from recent history. The leadership of the Church of Rome holds just as firmly and determinedly to its conviction of the right relation between Church and Government, and to unremitting effort to bring that relation to pass in every country as speedily and fully as possible.

To be sure, the official policy of the Roman Church in this matter is not understood by all Catholics. By others, it is regretted, and not taken seriously. But the hierarchy in particular are obligated by obedience to the Head of the Church to strive for the achievement of that relation between Church and Government in every country. Catholic leadership should not be criticized for this policy and this purpose. These are matters of essential faith; they would be disloyal to their faith and recreant to their responsibilities to that faith if they did *not* labor to that end. This explains the efforts of the Roman hierarchy to secure ever larger recognition at the hands of the American Government and governmental assistance, financial and otherwise, for Catholic institutions. It explains, likewise, the firm opposition of non-Catholic Americans to "political Romanism."

III

Thus we are led to a final point, one which is dimly sensed as lying behind the present specific issue but is seldom brought into the open. It concerns the role of the Roman Catholic Church as a spiritual institution and as a political power both in American life and in the world.

The Constitutional prohibition against "an establishment of religion" is concerned with internal American Government. It is sometimes said it, therefore, has no bearing upon the issue of a Vatican Embassy; and, contrariwise, that the establishment of an Embassy at the Vatican would have no appreciable influence upon domestic American affairs.

But how could that be? Disregard of the controlling American conviction and principle regarding right relations between Church and Government in our foreign policy could not fail to serve as a precedent and incentive to redoubled efforts to undermine that principle in domestic affairs.

Moreover, what the Courts have sought to enjoin in their interpretation of the Constitution is special privilege for any one Church *as a Church*. But a Vatican Embassy would constitute recognition of a Church *as a State*, and a World-State at that — a form of interlocking of Church and Government far more extreme and far more evil than "an establishment of religion."

The position of the Roman Church in this whole matter is riddled with inconsistency and internal self-contradiction. On the one hand, we are told that it is proposed to send an Ambassador to "the State of Vatican City" not to the Roman Catholic Church. The distinction between "the State of Vatican City" as a political institution and the Church of Rome as a world-wide spiritual body is, of course, a fiction which should deceive no one, and is not attempted by responsible Catholic spokesmen. The Vatican State of 108 acres and 1,000 population (slightly more than one-thousandth the size of Luxemburg) has no international importance. Mrs. Anne O'Hare McCormick, herself a devout Roman Catholic, reports from Rome on Christmas Eve: "Advocates who argue that the appointment is not to a religious leader but to the ruler of the scrap of real estate called Vatican City do not get much support here. The mission is either to the Pope as the head of a worldwide church or it is nothing, it is pointed out; to pretend anything else is to make the appointment useless or reduce it to absurdity."

On the other hand, only the worldwide Church functioning as a State and the Pope as its absolute sovereign could count significantly in the political arena. At once the question arises, who are the subjects of this State and its sovereign? Obviously, they can only be the members of that Church and its officers, its priests and bishops. But those members acknowledge political allegiance to the secular rulers of their several nations. How can they perform significant *political* functions as subjects of the Ruler of the Vatican State? And as for the priests and bishops of the Church, what *legitimate* political and military services can they render of which the American Government might take advantage?

In other words, only the Roman Church as a worldwide institution could hold significance justifying recognition. But, only as that Church functions, directly or indirectly, as a worldwide political Power could it serve the purposes advanced as justification for recognition. And, it is precisely the Church as an international State which stands in direct contravention of what Americans hold to be the true and proper function of any Church.

It cannot be too strongly affirmed that opposition to a Vatican Embassy is not opposition to the Roman Catholic Church in its spiritual ministry. It is "political Romanism" whether on the international or national scene which constitutes a challenge to American principles and a potential threat to American institutions. In refusing recognition of the Vatican as a political Power, non-Catholics believe they are serving the true interests of Roman Catholicism as a spiritual force and agency.

The Roman Catholic Church presents a baffling and harassing problem to all Americans who value religion and respect the spiritual ministries of the Catholic Church. They may be disturbed over the support given by the Catholic Church to reactionary political forces all over the world, as in Spain, Portugal and the Argentine. They may regret the increasing dependence of Catholic piety upon increasingly incredible miracles without Scriptural foundation, such as the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. But, the former is a matter of local Catholic policy in other lands. The latter is a matter of ecclesiastical doctrine. But the Catholic claim for the Church as a World-State and its attempt to exercise the functions of a Great Power in international affairs not only involves individual Catholics, especially the priesthood, in the dilemma of a dual political loyalty. It runs counter to the historic and strongly-held American conviction of sound relations between religion and politics, Church and Government. More than that, its widespread acceptance and adoption would constitute a grave threat to international order and peace.

In summary: What is at stake in the present issue, therefore, is much more than the wisdom of a political expedient in the face of immediate international problems. Or, than formal adherence to an American doctrine set down nearly two centuries ago. *The official recognition of the Roman Catholic Church (or any other Church) as a political Power, a Government entitled to diplomatic recognition, would be a long step in the direction of acceptance of the Catholic theory of Church-State relations and abandonment of the American principle of Church-State relations.* Even if it were justified on grounds of the most pressing immediate political necessity, as it is not, it would constitute a departure from the firmly established policy and practice of the American nation with respect to religion from its founding to the present day, fraught with ominous consequences for the long future.

The World Church: News and Notes

North India-Pakistan Issue Call to Prayer

India (EPS):—The National Christian Council of India recently issued the following Call to Prayer for India and East Pakistan (West Pakistan has now its own Christian Council) which was prepared by the Rt. Rev. Frank Whittaker, Bishop in Medak:

"There never was greater need for all Christians in India and Pakistan to give themselves to prayer for their country and for the world. We must ask 'what is it that God wants to do for us, and through us, for our country at this time?' We must go on asking until He gives us His answer.

"The high hopes with which we hailed the rebirth of our national life have given place to sober facing of the difficulties in the way of their realization. . . . There is wide opportunity for Christians in India and Pakistan to 'offer Christ' to their fellow men, by word and by deeds of loving kindness. The leaders of the Christian movement are being drawn into closer fellowship of thought, prayer and action, for the furtherance of the Gospel and the bearing of one another's burdens. . . .

"Our greatest concern, as Christians, must be for the spiritual renewal of all the Churches. We must pray that God will remove every cause of weakness and every hindrance to our witness. Let us pray for deliverance from indifference and worldliness, from lack of faith in God and from mistrust of one another. . . .

"Let us give thanks to God . . . for the attention now being given to the need for 'spontaneous evangelism,' by the witness of laymen in their daily work, by the witness of Christians to their neighbors and the concern of Christian congregations for those at their doors. . . .

"For all movements of the Spirit of God which are bringing Christians closer together; the progress in unity in South India, and the hopes of closer union in the North; the work of the National and Provincial Christian Councils, the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches, the witness and work of Christian organizations for work among youth. . . .

"For the Christian impact on the life of the nation: that all Christians may set a high standard of integrity and fair dealing in both private and public affairs; that Christian Churches and congregations may show forth the power of Christ to break down barriers, to cast out enmity, and to create peace and unity in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; that all Christians may rise above 'the spirit of the age' and live in this world as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. . . ."

Bishop, Nine Priests Expelled from China

Hong Kong (RNS):—A French bishop and nine priests, three of them Americans, arrived here to swell the number of Roman Catholic missionaries expelled from Communist China.

Catholic headquarters identified the prelate as 67-year-old Bishop August Gaspais, of Kirin, Manchuria. Prior to his expulsion he had been under house arrest for eight months and in jail for two.

The American priests were Fathers Raymond A. Gaspard, of Minneapolis, Minn.; Richard D. Mershon, of Denver, Colo.; and Joseph A. McDonald, of Belmont, Mass. They belong to the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, popularly known as the Maryknoll Fathers.

Father Gaspard had been in jail for eight months at Loting, Kwangtung province, when he was ordered expelled. Fathers Mershon and McDonald had been arrested but were not in jail when handed exit permits.

The other six priests were three Italians from Pengpu, Anhwei province—Fathers G. Barmoverain, Luigi Martignone and Paul Grech-Cumbo—and three French priests named Gilbert, Piou and Perrin.

Pastor Niemoeller Leaves for Moscow

Berlin (RNS):—Pastor Martin Niemoeller took off from the Soviet military airport at Schoenfeld near here for a visit to Moscow as the guest of Patriarch Alexei, head of the Russian Orthodox Church. He was accompanied by his youngest daughter, Herta, who will serve as his interpreter.

Arriving in Berlin from Wiesbaden, Pastor Niemoeller visited the Russian Orthodox representative in East Berlin and had a private talk with Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin before leaving.

Bishop Dibelius, who is chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, was quoted as stating that Pastor Niemoeller's visit to Moscow was of a purely religious character.

However, church circles here expressed the hope that his trip would help to bring about the release of German prisoners of war still held in the U. S. S. R. They said that Pastor Niemoeller was one of the few persons who could "talk to the East with the prospect of being listened to."

European press comment has been generally skeptical regarding Pastor Niemoeller's journey, warning that it will be exploited by Communist propaganda.

Soviet Zone Has Acute Shortage of Clergy

Berlin (RNS):—Statistics issued here by the Evangelical Church in Germany disclosed an acute shortage of clergymen in the Soviet Zone, with no prospect of any substantial improvement in the near future.

According to the statistics, 1,777 of the 7,211 pastoral offices in the Soviet Zone have no incumbent, and already 1,111 parsonages have had to be permanently closed.

These conditions were attributed chiefly to the lack of

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young clergymen and the depletion of the ranks of the ministry caused by the war. The shortage of young pastors was blamed on policies of Soviet Zone education authorities obviously aimed at discouraging young men from studying for the ministry.

The reports showed that some territorial churches in East Germany have sought to cope with the situation by admitting laymen without theological training to the pastoral office. After a short period of training at preachers' seminaries, the young men are assigned, following a probationary period, to the same duties as "academic" pastors. These duties include the administration of the sacraments.

Plojhar Named Czech Party Head

London (RNS): — Joseph Plojhar, excommunicated priest who heads the Ministry of Health in Communist Czechoslovakia, was elected chairman of the Czechoslovak People's Party, the Prague Radio reported. The party is Communist-controlled.

The station said Minister Plojhar was elected to the office as a reward for his "loyalty to exemplary patriotic priests and his work in establishing good relations between the Church and State."

UN Refugee Commissioner Praises Religious Groups

Paris (RNS):—Dr. J. C. van Heuven Goedhart, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, paid tribute here to three religious organizations for their "excellent work" on behalf of refugees.

The groups named by Commissioner Goedhart were the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, and the National Catholic Welfare Conference in the United States.

Commissioner Goedhart cited the three groups at a press conference during which he explained how assistance to refugees could be made through voluntary agencies from a proposed $3,000,000 international emergency fund.

Creation of the fund was suggested by the commissioner himself to meet minimum requirements during 1952 of refugees unable to support themselves or to obtain public assistance.

World Council Issues Prayer for Refugees

Geneva (RNS):—The World Council of Churches has asked member Churches to adopt a special prayer for homeless refugees in their services.

Entitled "A Prayer for the Refugees," it was prepared by Dr. George K. A. Bell, Bishop of Chichester, England, and chairman of the World Council's Central Committee. He drafted the prayer in consultation with other World Council leaders and with Dr. G. J. van Heuven Goedhart, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The prayer reads as follows:

"Almighty God, whose blessed Son had no place on earth to lay His head, we thank Thee with all our hearts that, having kept us from the tribulations which many of Thy children suffer, Thou hast permitted us to dwell peacefully in the land that we love.

"Open our hearts to the sorrows of the refugees, who, through the cruelty of men and for the sake of that which they believed, have suffered the loss of those good things which we enjoy, and now live as aliens and outcasts, having nothing that they can call their own.

"Help us to remember that it is not for our merits, but only of Thy grace that we have been preserved.

"Inspire our nations to take courageous and generous action for the sake of the refugees.

"And make Thy Church a place in which the homeless find a home, the hopeless recover hope and the wounds of men are healed, through the love of Thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen."

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